



Bitterroot National Forest

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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"Safe but insane 4th of July on the Forest"

Hamilton, Montana, July 5th, 2007 — Wednesday July 4th set new records for use at Lake Como Recreation Area. And Forest Service managers expect the trend to continue.

"By noon the recreation area's 200 day use parking spots, both boating and beach, were filled to capacity and people just kept coming. Since the 4th fell on a Wednesday, we had more folks just out for the day — and with the temperature in the 90's everyone wanted to be in the water. I suspect that this weekend may be a repeat — record temperatures and crowds looking for water," stated Mary Laws, Recreation Program Manager for the Bitterroot National Forest. "Bass Creek Recreation area day use was also quite busy, while most of the campgrounds in the valley saw low to moderate use."

While it was insanely busy along water ways and lakes, it was a quiet day on the Bitterroot Forest with no major fire incidents. There was quite a force of help out over the 4th with Highway Patrol, Ravalli County Sheriffs, Montana Fish & Game, Forest Law Enforcement, recreation folks and fire crews. Only one fire start, attributed to fireworks, was reported.

Enforcement of the recreation and camping fee, parking, and dogs on the beach or not on a leach have been stepped up in recent weeks. With the volume of traffic, especially at Lake Como Recreation Area, seemly minor things such as parking partially in the road way can quickly become a critical safety issue. Wednesday afternoon folks were directed to park up the Lick Creek road, on one side of the road. Within a few minutes here were cars parked on both sides of the road leaving little room for traffic up and down Lick Creek.

Laws asks that everyone have a little patience, be aware of what they are doing and what impacts it may have on others. When heading for popular lake or river spots consider carpooling with friends and family to help relieve parking.

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